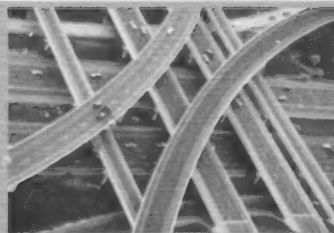




The Regional Municipality of York  
Economic Development  
**ACTION PLAN**





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Town of Markham



Regional Councillor  
Jack Heath  
Town of Markham



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Town of Richmond Hill



Mayor  
Maurizio Bevilacqua  
City of Vaughan



Chairman & CEO  
Bill Fisch



Mayor  
Tony Van Bynen  
Town of Newmarket

## A Message from York Regional Council

This Economic Development Action Plan is a vital component of our efforts to facilitate significant, long-term economic development for The Regional Municipality of York.

To meet the Provincial Growth Plan target of 780,000 jobs in the Region by 2031, this plan focuses on supporting and developing creative people, companies and institutions to form a York Region innovation network.

York Region already has a robust and diverse economy. While manufacturing continues to be important, the majority of new employment is in knowledge-based and service activities. York Region is home to one of the largest information and communications technology clusters in Canada and is growing in the life sciences and business services sectors.

This plan encourages connections between business, academia, research-focused institutions and governments to accelerate innovation, collaboration and partnerships.

Please consider how this plan can be improved to facilitate the creation and retention of jobs in the Region. Let us know your suggestions by emailing [edo@york.ca](mailto:edo@york.ca) or by calling 905.830.4444 Ext.1512. We welcome your comments and input.



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Mayor  
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Town of East Gwillimbury



Mayor  
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Township of King



Mayor  
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Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

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# Economic Development Action Plan

## Executive Summary

In the rapidly changing economic and social environment that exists, future prosperity will depend upon the support and development of creative people, companies and institutions – the Innovation Network. The Economic Development Action Plan builds on previous success while recognizing emerging trends and opportunities to build that network.

York Region has a number of Council-approved strategic documents that provide clear direction regarding economic vitality both in **the long term and within the current term of Council**. Significant research and consultation was undertaken in the preparation of these strategic documents. The Action Plan serves to implement this direction.

**The targets established in the strategy have been refined** to address the quantity of jobs required to maintain a healthy live-work balance, the types of knowledge-based employment, as well as the creation and expansion of innovative companies and innovation assets in the Region.

**The Plan identifies Goals 1 and 2 that represent major new priority activities that would be transformational.** These will require **significant time, effort, and resources but will result in significant economic impact.** The Plan also identifies Goals 3 through 6 as being more tactical in nature, resulting in incremental economic growth and activity. Many of these activities already form part of programs delivered by the Region and its economic development partners.

### Economic Development Action Plan Goals

#### Transformational Goals

- GOAL 1 -** Develop A Greater Post-Secondary And Research Presence
- GOAL 2 -** Provide Connectivity Infrastructure To Support Innovation Incremental Goals

#### Incremental Goals

- GOAL 3 -** Develop The Innovation Network Connecting Businesses To Opportunities
- GOAL 4 -** Develop A Strong, Common Marketing Message
- GOAL 5 -** Creating The Place To Live, Work And Invest, Including Appropriate Real Estate
- GOAL 6 -** Develop A Viable Workforce



## Major Actions Within The Plan Include:

### GOAL 1

- Support opportunities for expanding existing post-secondary facility, programs and partnerships within the Region
- Undertake a targeted campaign to attract a major postsecondary campus
- Support public and private research-based investments, focusing on partnerships with existing facilities and support development of new innovation hubs

### GOAL 2

- Complete an assessment of the bandwidth capabilities across the Region
- Facilitate a plan for connecting existing networks and implementing new links that support innovation hub development in key areas

### GOAL 3

- Support and help facilitate an 'Innovation Council', bringing together key stakeholders on a regular basis to help identify emerging opportunities and drive change
- Maintain a program of direct business contact, both with existing businesses and potential investors, to facilitate partnerships that lead to growth

### GOAL 4

- Develop an economic development communications plan built around a series of clear messages about York Region as a place to grow and invest

- Create interactive tools to support investment attraction efforts
- Develop a marketing campaign around emerging real estate opportunities such as the subway extension, centres and corridors, and major employment areas/business parks

### GOAL 5

- Develop and maintain an inventory of key employment opportunities to support policy development and marketing
- Identify appropriate publicly-owned lands that could be used to attract desirable investments such as research-based institutions
- Ensure live-work opportunities are supported through policy

### GOAL 6

- Support the connection between the skilled workforce and employers
- Support programs that identify and access the under-utilized immigrant workforce

## IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING

The Economic Development Action Plan will be implemented primarily through the Economic Strategy Branch annual program and budget. The Branch will work with internal and external delivery partners to develop programs and leverage the necessary resources. Targets established in the Action Plan will be monitored through the annual Strategic Plan review with Council in June of each year. The Action Plan has been designed to serve the balance of this term of Council, after which time the Plan will be reviewed in concert with the next major update to the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan at the beginning of the next term of Council.

# Introduction

In the rapidly changing economic and social environment that exists, future prosperity will depend upon the support and development of creative people, companies and institutions – the Innovation Network.

## **The Council-Approved 2005 Economic Strategy Established A Strong Basis For Success Based On Partnerships**

The 2005 Economic Strategy identified five strategic goals including:

1. Create an environment to share information and ideas
2. Sustain a high quality workforce
3. Strengthen entrepreneurship and industry clusters
4. Enhance the quality of place
5. Encourage the efficient movement of goods and people

An underlying theme of all the goals was the creation of partnerships to deliver effective programs with the broadest possible reach, creating collaboration between communities. The 2005 Economic Strategy established a solid foundation for success based on the strong partnerships established to deliver on the actions.



## **The 2005 Strategy Contained Five Strategic Goals With 90 Associated Actions That Have Been or Are in the Process Of Being Completed**

### **Key Accomplishments:**

- Business education events such as the 'Business Innovation in Changing Times' series in partnership with numerous northern six community stakeholders
- Facilitating the creation or expansion of over 1,000 businesses and over 1,300 jobs through the Small Business Enterprise Centre programs since 2005

- Developing the York Region Immigration Portal to support the significant immigrant workforce needed to fill newly created jobs
- Facilitating connections between companies and international markets through the Investment Marketing Program, resulting in the creation of over 400 jobs
- Facilitating the creation of ventureLAB, York Region's Regional Innovation Centre to support innovative companies to commercialize products for market
- Facilitating the transition to Regional Tourism Organization Zone 6 – Central Counties as a larger regional tourism destination
- Directing development in York Region by creating a Centres and Corridors focus through the new Official Plan, paving the way for intensified employment and live/work opportunities
- Developing a Regional Transportation Master Plan that promotes connectivity and attracts and supports new business ventures
- Establishing a Smart Commute program to engage York Region businesses

### **The Economic Development Action Plan Builds On Previous Success While Recognizing Emerging Trends And Opportunities**

The Action Plan does not replace the 2005 Economic Development Strategy but builds on its foundation to address new challenges and emerging trends in the economy and the Region.

The Action Plan evaluates where the Region has been and will continue to be successful, and recommends programs, actions and partnerships that will foster continued success. The Economic Development Action Plan implements the Strategic Priorities of Council as detailed in guiding documents such as Vision 2051 and the 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan, with an emphasis on creating jobs that are critical for future economic prosperity.

Many of the actions identified in the 2005 Economic Strategy are reflected in the new Economic Development Action Plan.

York Region's future economic success depends not only on economic factors but also on physical and social factors which influence all parts of the Region. There is a growing awareness of the economic implications of Regional programs that are being reflected in corporate strategic documents. Building internal and external partnerships will continue to play a critical role in developing and delivering programs that support economic vitality.

## SECTION ONE

# Strategic Direction for Regional Economic Action

York Region has a number of Council-approved strategic documents that provide clear direction regarding economic development both in the long term and within the current term of Council. Significant research and consultation was undertaken in the preparation of these strategic documents.

### VISION 2051

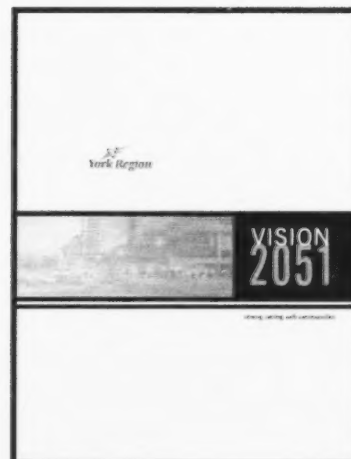
Vision 2051 was approved by Regional Council in May of 2012 and with respect to Economic Development, it sets a long-term vision for a Regional economy that facilitates creativity and fosters innovation, provides knowledge economy supportive infrastructure and resources, and attracts and develops a creative and skilled workforce.

The vision for York Region in 2051 is articulated through eight goal areas and corresponding action areas. Alignment with those goals and actions ensure that the decisions made today set the course for the future.

One of the eight goal areas entitled "An Innovation Economy" sets the vision statement for the economy and provides the overarching direction for the Economic Development Action Plan.

In 2051, York Region's economy is resilient and focuses on creativity and innovation with sufficient infrastructure and resources to support a knowledge economy. York Region's diverse labour force is supported with opportunities for collaboration and continuous learning and development.

To support this goal, York Region, working in collaboration with others, will focus on the following actions:



### AN ECONOMY THAT FACILITATES CREATIVITY AND FOSTERS INNOVATION

- Recognizing the Region as a global hub for innovation
- Supporting creativity that leads to innovation and positive change
- Encouraging a strong, resilient, competitive and diverse economy that attracts global investment
- Developing and attracting businesses from a broad array of sectors
- Providing programs and initiatives that foster entrepreneurship and support small business development and growth



- Focusing on developing the green/blue/brown economy; building on the fundamentals of energy, water, and waste as opportunities for innovation
- Promoting the creation of eco-business and employment areas, which facilitate sustainable business practices and an eco-business approach to streamlining business operations through resource and knowledge sharing, and eco-efficiency approaches
- Supporting arts and cultural industries

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES SUPPORTING A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY**

- Facilitating the creation of an advanced telecommunication technology infrastructure to support the innovation network across the Region
- Supporting an innovation ecosystem and the development of innovation hubs throughout the Region
- Harnessing and developing knowledge resources, including research and academic institutions
- Investing in innovation, education and training, entrepreneurs and the development of innovation incubators
- Encouraging the use of sustainability principles in business operations
- Pursuing the development of a University and a national scale innovation research institute in the Region
- Supporting the efficient movement of people and goods throughout the Region and surrounding areas

#### **ATTRACTING AND DEVELOPING A CREATIVE AND SKILLED WORK FORCE**

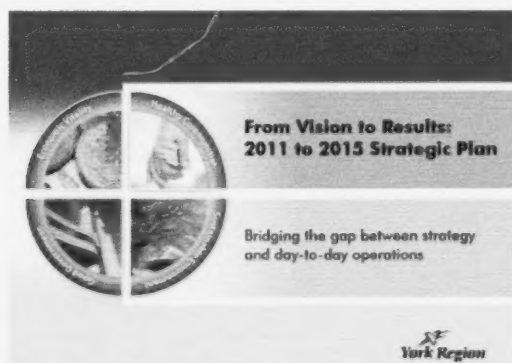
- Promoting the creation of a quality job for every resident in York Region, of every skill and level of education
- Promoting York Region as a destination of choice for skilled and educated new immigrants by recognizing that their education, skills and experience are vital to our global economic success
- Focusing on continuous education, and training and skills development to ensure a labour force that is resilient to economic changes, and flexible and adaptable as the economy and labour needs change
- Identifying the educational needs of the workforce together with key workforce development agencies, business and educational partners
- Encouraging progressive and innovative work and other opportunities that respond to the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities, to maximize productivity and inclusivity in the economy, and provide opportunities for everyone in York Region to contribute
- Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the labour force and encouraging education about business and entrepreneurial skills in early education
- Recognizing the importance of quality and affordable child and elder care options to support a working population

## THE 2011 TO 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by Regional Council in 2011, the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan includes as one of seven strategic priority areas, a section entitled, "Increase the Economic Vitality of the Region".

This section identifies strategic objectives around increasing employment opportunities, positioning York Region as the "Region of Choice" for innovative growing employment sectors, and protecting employment lands. This identifies the priorities during the current term of Council.

The Region will concentrate on increasing the number of innovative employers locating in the Region while strengthening existing employment sectors within the Region. The strategic objectives and indicators of success identified in the priority area demonstrate Council's commitment to increase the economic vitality of the Region through targeted economic development and job creation.



2011 to 2015 Strategic Objectives	Indicator of Success
Increased number of jobs created in York Region by an Average of 19,000 jobs per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of jobs created in York Region by an average of 19,000 jobs per year</li> <li>Increased percentage of people who live and work in York Region</li> </ul>
Position York Region as the "Region of Choice" for innovative growing employment sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of the Economic Development Action Plan focusing on innovation as a theme (Economic Strategy update)</li> <li>Number of new 'innovation hubs' within York Region</li> <li>Increased post-secondary institutions presence and partnerships within York Region</li> <li>Increased number of exports/imports businesses/industries in York Region</li> <li>Increased number of small business start ups</li> </ul>
Sustain protection of employment lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protecting and securing employment lands along 400 series highways</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>Innovation Hubs are defined by the York Region Office of the CAO as facilities, partnership and entities that form in an area to develop and promote innovation in a particular field.

## THE REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN

Approved by Regional Council in 2010, the Regional Official Plan includes Section 4, Economic Vitality which lays out a series of policies designed to diversify the economy, support the Region as a place to live, work and visit, promote centres and corridors, protect employment lands, and promote fiscally sustainable development. The Official Plan adopts the Provincial Growth Plan target of an additional 280,000 jobs in the Region from 2010 to 2031, a compelling and challenging target that sets the tone for all economic development initiatives.



## LOCAL MUNICIPAL ECONOMIC STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN RECOMMENDING ACTIONS

The nine local municipalities in York Region exhibit a broad range of economic strengths and opportunities. The vast and varying geography of York Region and the degree of current and planned urbanization demand different strategies for economic growth and prosperity at the local municipal level. The Economic Development Action Plan recommends actions that address the broader economic vitality of the region, while recognizing the implementation of these actions may occur within specific locations within the Region.

Most of the local municipalities have completed economic development strategies over the past five to 10 years. These strategies have been reviewed as part of the Region's Economic Development Action Plan review process and have been considered in the proposed actions.

The goals and actions in the Economic Development Action Plan are designed to be complementary to local strategies, initiatives and messaging.



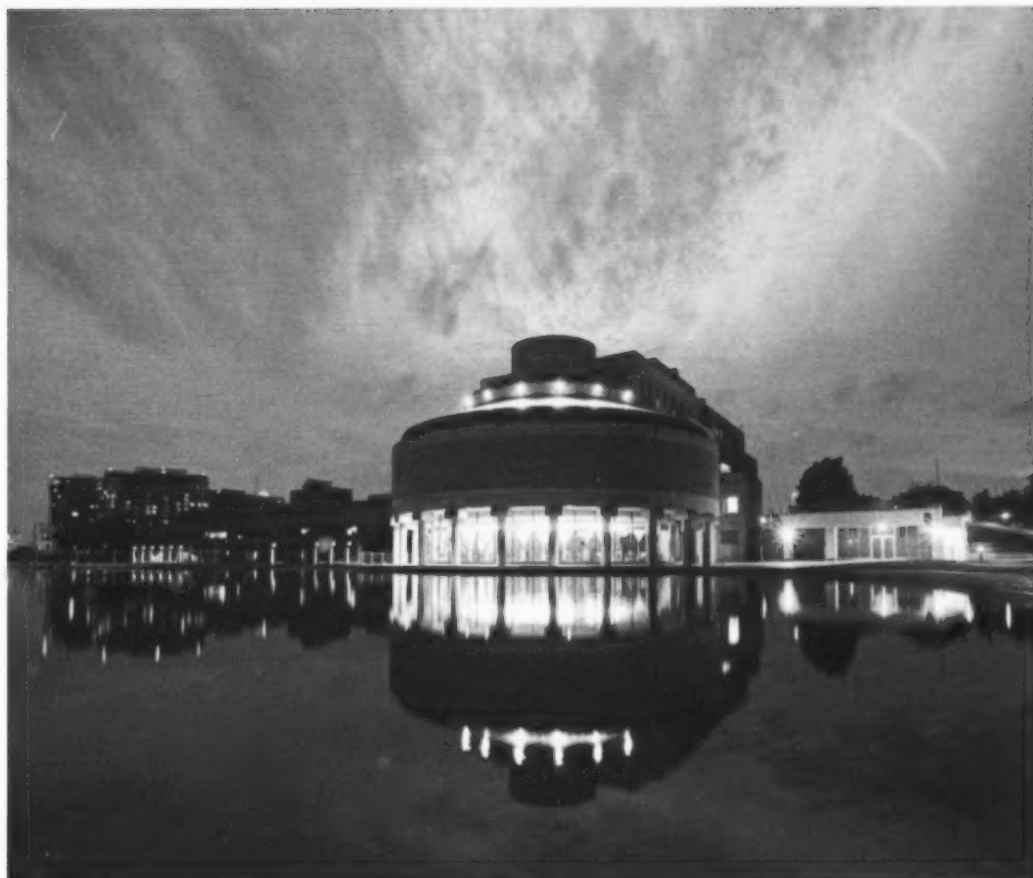
**EXAMPLES OF COMPLEMENTARY INITIATIVES IN LOCAL PLANS INCLUDE:**

1. Access and proximity to major highways, the airport and future subway/transit connections, such as an employment hub within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre
2. Proximity to existing companies, entities and institutions, such as the development of medical nodes around regional hospitals
3. Proximity to natural features that support targeted initiatives, such as a water centre for innovation on Lake Simcoe
4. Availability of employment lands within designated business parks, typically adjacent to the 400 series highways

**The Economic Development Action Plan**

The Economic Development Action Plan has been created to further refine the strategic objectives in Council-approved documents and provide details around how the Region can achieve the economic vision and goals while considering local economic strategies.

The Action Plan serves to implement the strategic direction and priorities of Council as detailed in these guiding documents. The targets established in the strategy have been refined to address the quantity of jobs required to maintain a healthy live-work balance, the types of knowledge-based employment, as well as the creation and expansion of innovative companies and the innovation assets in the Region.





## SECTION TWO

# Process For Creating The Economic Development Action Plan

This section identifies the steps taken to seek Council approval of the process, as well as the research work and consultation process undertaken that led to the recommended actions.

The work plan process for the Economic Development Action Plan was approved by Council on September 22, 2011. The process outlined on this page has involved a series of overlapping stages, with progress reports to Committee and Council at various stages.

### The Process Included Consultations With A Wide Range Of Community Stakeholders

Over 20 consultation sessions and presentations were conducted involving over 150 stakeholders including:

- The nine local municipalities
- Various Chambers of Commerce and Board of Trade
- Regional staff from various departments including: Community and Health Services, Corporate Services, Environmental Services, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Office of the CAO, Property Services, Transportation and Community Planning and Legal.
- Innovation partners including ventureLAB and the Innovation Leadership Forum
- The Regional Hospital Network including Southlake Regional Health Centre, York-Central Regional Health Centre and Markham-Stouffville Hospital
- Educational institutions including Seneca College and York University

- Other community stakeholders including the York Region Arts Council and the York Agricultural Advisory Committee

Stakeholders have had a direct impact on direction, development of themes and proposed actions of the plan.

### THE PROCESS

#### Council Approval of Action Plan process and Direction

September 22, 2011

#### Research on the Regional economy and innovation

October 2011 to April 2012

#### Initial economic development stakeholder consultations

November 2011 to December 2011

#### Report to Committee and Council on emerging themes

January 11, 2012

#### Secondary Stakeholder consultation on emerging themes

January 2012 to May 2012

#### Identification of key Regional innovation opportunities

December 2011 to April 2012

#### Report to Committee on identified innovation activities

April 4, 2012

#### Council receipt of the Draft Action Plan and approval to circulate the document for comment and finalization

June 28, 2012

#### Final Action Plan report to Committee recommending approval

November 28, 2012



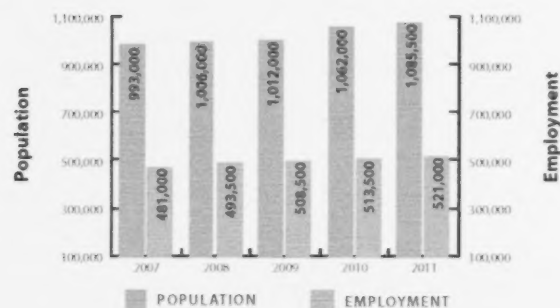
## SECTION 3

# The State Of The York Region Economy A Leading Economic Region

## YORK REGION RANKS FIRST IN EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN ONTARIO

York Region has a robust and diverse economy. The Region accounted for 20 per cent of population growth in the province over the past five years, and 13 per cent of net new employment growth provincially in 2011. York Region is expected to continue to be a focus for population and employment growth within both the GTA and provincial context.

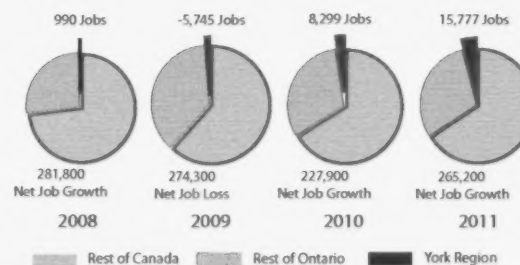
FIGURE 1  
YORK REGION'S POPULATION  
AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH



Source: Places to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006, Office Consolidation January 2012 and Ontario Ministry of Finance, Population Projection Updates, Spring 2011

The majority of employment is focused on knowledge-based and service activities. Manufacturing remains an important part of the Region's economy, but due in part to continual diversifying Regional economy, its share of employment has been reduced since the mid-2000s.

FIGURE 2  
ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH  
(UNADJUSTED VS. PREVIOUS PERIOD)  
2008-2011



Source: Statistics Canada - York Region, Long Range Planning, Employment and Industry Report, 2011

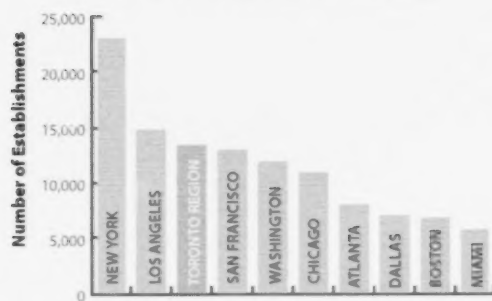
## Home To Major Economic Clusters

Research suggests economic clusters play a significant role in Regional competitiveness. Strong related clusters lead to job growth, higher wages and greater new business formation. York Region is home to several significant related clusters, including:

### Information And Communications Technology (Ict)

With 3,600 local ICT companies, York Region has the highest number of ICT companies per capita in Canada (Statistics Canada 2011). York Region is home to many of the big name ICT companies, including IBM's largest software development lab globally outside the U.S. Three of Canada's top 10 ICT corporate research and development spenders are headquartered here. The cluster represents the highest concentration of Canada's 250 largest ICT firms, and the highest concentration of Canada's fastest-growing ICT firms.

**FIGURE 4**  
TOP REGIONS IN NORTH AMERICA  
BY NUMBER OF ICT ESTABLISHMENTS

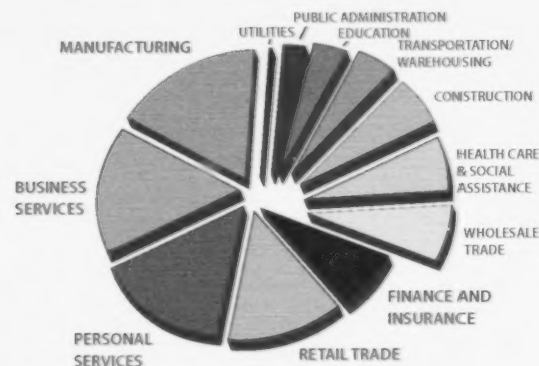


Source: TRRA Analysis based on Statistics Canada, 2008

### Life Sciences

The GTA is home to a Life Sciences industry group of 1,300 firms (37,000 employees), including 25 of top 50 global pharma company headquarters. Sixteen of the top 25 global medical device companies operate in York Region. The cluster is supported by a significant healthcare research and service delivery network that includes Ontario's largest Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). York Region is home to three world-class hospitals providing clinical opportunities with specialty areas including cardiac, cancer, arthritis, pediatrics and chronic disease. The Regional hospitals are beginning to work in tandem with business to support innovative healthcare delivery solutions.

**FIGURE 3**  
YORK REGION EMPLOYMENT  
BY SECTOR



Source: York Region, Long Range Planning, Employment and Industry Report, 2011

### Other Key Sectors

Other sectors of significance in the Region include business and financial services, clean technology, agri-business, food processing, tourism, arts and culture.

### Support For Innovation

Several key facilities and organizations have been established in the Region to support innovation including:

Markham Convergence Centre (MCC):

One-stop-shop for business development and innovation, a hub for medical and ICT sectors convergence.

ventureLAB Regional Innovation Centre:

A member of Ontario's Network of Excellence (ONE), providing start-up and commercialization support services.

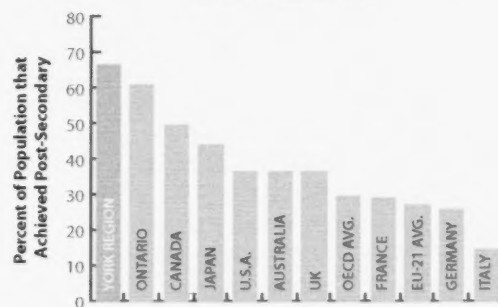
### A Qualified, Diverse, And Dynamic Workforce

York Region's workforce exceeds five hundred thousand and is part of a larger GTA pool of over three million workers. York Region's workforce education level is well-above Canadian, U.S., and global averages. Eighty-three thousand university graduates and forty-seven thousand immigrants with university degrees enter the area workforce every year. The workforce is young, with 36 percent of York Region's population aged between 20 to 44 years. York Region is diverse and multilingual, with 45 percent of York Region residents being foreign born, and over 65 languages spoken.

### Superior Infrastructure Connecting Business, Markets And Workforce

York Region has a significant production and distribution system for the movement and sale of goods. The southwest portion of the Region is close to Toronto Pearson International Airport (North America's 4th largest), and the Region also hosts Canada's largest intermodal container freight rail terminal in the City of Vaughan. Close to 100 local freight trucking providers are located in York Region. With direct access to Canada's largest freeway network on four 400-series highways, the Region is well positioned from a business and consumer market access perspective.

**FIGURE 5**  
**COMPLETION OF POST-SECONDARY**  
**EDUCATION CHART**



Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2011 data,  
Statistics Canada



The Region has made significant infrastructure investment in roads, services and transit, and plans an additional \$8 billion investment over the 2011 to 2020 period to ensure the infrastructure is in place to support business and residential growth.



## SECTION FOUR

# Addressing Challenges And Opportunities To Promote Future Economic Vitality

### THE IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION – A CRITICAL FACTOR IN FUTURE SUCCESS

Research suggests that fostering creativity and innovation are essential to economic vitality.

According to the World Economic Forum, in The Global Competitiveness Report 2010 to 2011, "... in the long run, standards of living can be enhanced only by technological innovation". The report goes on to say firms, "... must design and develop cutting-edge products and processes to maintain a competitive edge."

The Martin Prosperity Institute, in its April 2009 publication Ontario Competes: Performance Overview Using the 3Ts of Economic Development, states "... it is the most creative and innovative economies that will emerge as leaders".

Innovation is accelerated through connections between business, academia, research-focused institutions and governments. The most successful economic regions have a strong innovation network and a significant post-secondary research presence as an anchor-catalyst. Access to key innovation-supportive infrastructure is essential to attracting and retaining value-added, knowledge-based businesses and institutions, particularly those with a research focus.

Through the review process and research undertaken, it is clear York Region has a vibrant economy. Through various strategic documents both Regional and local, paths have been identified to maintain that vibrancy and advance the Region economically. However through the consultation process several challenges and gaps were identified by stakeholders that will require particular attention over the short and long term. The challenges and gaps if not addressed could negatively impact the Region's ability to continue to lead in economic growth. The major challenges and opportunities are identified as issues and outlined as follows:

**Issue 1:** Many connections between academic institutions, businesses and government exist within the Region, but the lack of a major research intensive post-secondary institution or research institute and the talent and infrastructure they attract leaves the Region vulnerable to falling behind other regions in knowledge-based growth.

**Issue 2:** Innovation-supportive infrastructure such as bandwidth exists, but is not robust enough in some areas to allow major new innovation hubs to develop and advance.

**Issue 3:** As the economy continues to transform from goods-production to knowledge-based services, additional emphasis must be placed on helping companies and institutions become innovative in order to continue to grow.

**Issue 4:** Despite its size and importance, the Region remains 'under the radar' relative to other jurisdictions seeking knowledge-based economic growth which may lead to missed investment opportunities.

**Issue 5:** Significant real estate opportunities exist to support future value-added, knowledge-based employment growth, particularly employment lands along 400 series highways, but short-term market pressures put some areas at risk of conversion which may negatively impact long-term economic vitality. The extension of the Toronto subway system into the Region will create the opportunity for high-intensity employment growth in key knowledge-based sectors and the associated planning framework and approvals will need to be in place to ensure investment interest can be accommodated.

**Issue 6:** Significant talent within the workforce continues to be under-utilized, particularly in the immigrant workforce, which will become increasingly important to tap over time.

The Goals and Actions developed through the process are designed to address these issues, engaging the relevant partnerships within and beyond the community to secure success.



## SECTION FIVE

# The Action Plan

This section lays out a series of recommended actions under the six goal areas that emerged through the analysis. Each action indicates potential delivery partners for the Region, as well as expected timing and resources, where possible and appropriate. The goals and actions are complementary and in many cases, actions under one goal support the implementation of actions under other goals.



### The Economic Development Action Plan Includes Major Initiatives That Will Transform The Region

The Plan identifies Goals 1 and 2 that represent major new priority activities that would be transformational. These will require significant time, effort, and resources but will result in significant economic impact. These transformational goals and actions include:



#### GOAL 1

**DEVELOP A GREATER POST-SECONDARY AND RESEARCH PRESENCE**

#### GOAL 2

**PROVIDE CONNECTIVITY INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT INNOVATION**

### **The Economic Development Plan Also Recommends Incremental Initiatives**

The Plan also identifies Goals 3 through 6 as being more tactical in nature, resulting in incremental economic growth and activity. Many of these activities already form part of programs delivered by the Region and its economic development partners. These goals and actions include:

#### **GOAL 3**

**DEVELOP THE INNOVATION NETWORK CONNECTING BUSINESSES TO OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **GOAL 4**

**DEVELOP A STRONG, COMMON MARKETING MESSAGE**



#### **GOAL 5**

**CREATING THE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND INVEST, INCLUDING APPROPRIATE REAL ESTATE**

#### **GOAL 6**

**DEVELOP A VIABLE WORKFORCE**

### **IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING**

The Economic Development Action Plan will be implemented primarily through the incorporation of the approved Actions into the Economic Strategy Branch annual program and budget. The Economic Strategy Branch will work with internal and external delivery partners to develop programs and leverage the resources necessary to deliver the programs. Activities requiring resources will be brought forward to Council for consideration as part of the annual budget process.

Progress on the Action Plan will be tied to the reporting out of results on key performance indicators in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. Targets established in the Action Plan will be translated into the Strategic Plan reporting system, which is reviewed quarterly with Senior Management of the Region and annually with Council each June.

Council will receive regular Action Plan activity reports throughout the year in the form of Innovation Updates, highlighting results achieved in each of the Goal areas.

The Action Plan has been designed to serve the balance of this term of Council, after which time the Plan will be reviewed in concert with the next major update to the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan at the beginning of the next term of Council.



# GOAL 1

## Transformational - Develop A Greater Post-Secondary And Research Presence

### Key Actions:

- Support opportunities for expanding existing post-secondary facility, programs and partnerships within the Region
- Undertake a targeted campaign to attract a major post-secondary campus
- Support public and private research-based investments, focusing on partnerships with existing facilities and support development of new innovation hubs

**Issue 1:** Many connections between academic institutions, businesses and government exist within the Region, but the lack of a major research intensive post-secondary institution or research institute and the talent and infrastructure they attract leaves the Region vulnerable to falling behind other regions in knowledge-based growth.

Most renowned economic clusters around the world are anchored by a strong, research-focused post-secondary institution presence. Post-secondary institutions are themselves economic drivers, enhancing regional economic development in several important ways—as an employer, purchaser, real estate developer, workforce developer, advisor/network builder, and technology transformer and incubator.

Businesses and investors look for jurisdictions with higher education and skill levels to locate and invest. The significant presence of post-secondary institutions raise the education and skill levels locally, providing a pool of desirable labour and making for a more attractive investment climate.

### The Post-Secondary Presence In York Region

Seneca College represents the most significant post-secondary presence in the Region, with major existing and planned investments in facilities and programs. Seneca has two major campuses located in the City of Markham and Township of King, and their recently completed campus master plan indicates significant growth opportunities at both these locations.

Other notable post-secondary presence in the Region include York University with embedded researchers in Southlake Regional Health Centre and Mackenzie Health and an established presence in the Markham Convergence Centre. The University of Toronto operates a biodiversity, ecology, and conservation program at the Koffler Scientific Reserve, and the University of Guelph operates the Muck Soil Research Station, both in King Township.

Other post-secondary partnerships exist through the Kortright Conservation Centre with several renewable energy research projects and through IBM's recently announced major research initiative in partnership with 10 Ontario post-secondary institutions.

Opportunities exist with the pre-existing post-secondary presence to expand and enhance partnerships and potentially attract additional investment. It would also be desirable and beneficial to attract a new research-focused university and/or college campus that directly enhances the research capabilities within the Region.

### The Opportunity For A New Undergraduate Post-Secondary Campus

Interest has been expressed in pursuing one of three new undergraduate post-secondary satellite campuses in Ontario announced by the Province in their Fall 2011 throne speech, and it may be appropriate to put forward potential sites within the Region.

Given the potential for post-secondary investments from both existing and new partners, the Region should aim to align these initiatives to complement existing economic goals and infrastructure investments in order to realize enhanced benefits.

Action Item	Delivery Partners	Targets and Timing
a. Work with Seneca College to support their expansion plans in King and Markham campuses and assist in connecting these facilities with relevant partnerships	Seneca College, relevant local Municipalities	King Campus - Phase I by 2016 King Campus - Phase II by 2021 Markham Campus by 2021
b. Review other current post-secondary presence/research partnerships in the community for potential expansion and connections	Post-Secondary Institutions, current hosts	10 partnership reviews by end of Q4 2013
c. Develop a strategy and business case for attracting one of the provincially-proposed major undergraduate post-secondary satellite campuses to the Region	Local Municipalities, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Development Industry	Business case developed by end of Q1 2013.
d. Examine the development of a potential 'collaboration campus', both physical and virtual, to attract multiple institutions to the Region	Innovation Leaders Forum, Ontario Post-Secondary Institutions	Develop a draft model by end of Q4 2012
e. Link small and medium sized businesses to post-secondary research partnerships	ventureLAB, Ontario Centres of Excellence, Industrial Research Assistance Program, local Municipalities	Ongoing - 25 Linkages per year
f. Identify and develop relationships between businesses and institutions in the Region with private research initiatives and facilities, such as the IBM research lab	ventureLAB, Innovation Leaders Forum	Ongoing - 12 linkages per year

## GOAL 2

### Transformational -

### Provide Connectivity Infrastructure To Support Innovation

#### Key Actions:

- Complete an assessment of the bandwidth capabilities across the Region
- Facilitate a plan for connecting existing networks and implementing new links that support innovation hub development in key areas

Issue 2: Innovation-supportive infrastructure such as bandwidth exists, but is not robust enough in some areas to allow major new innovation hubs to develop and advance.

Recent research suggests that increased broadband speed contributes significantly to economic growth. Ultra-fast broadband is now viewed as essential infrastructure for supporting innovation and driving economic growth across all industry sectors, not only ICT or knowledge-based businesses.

Enhancing and extending network connections across the Region have been consistently identified as critical to support existing business growth, and to attract and expand research functions. Some businesses and institutions in the Region have identified limited bandwidth availability as a direct impediment to their growth and development.

Current initiatives underway in the Region include:

- Introduction of direct connections (points of presence) for the Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network (ORION) within the Region
- Introduction of an Intelligent Communities initiative within the Region, including the initiation of community readiness assessments

The consultations with the stakeholders in the community today and the results from the May, 2012 Business and Bandwidth conference strongly suggest there is an appetite now to examine a collective effort in this regard. A range of technology solutions is available to address needs across the significant geography of the Region.



Action Item	Delivery Partners	Targets and Timing
a. Assess community readiness to develop, support and utilize network connections and upgrades	Local Municipalities, Stakeholder Consortium	Complete community assessment by end of Q3 2013
b. Identify and map the existing broadband/bandwidth networks within the Region to identify opportunities and gaps	Service providers, network owners, local Municipalities	Complete mapping by end of Q3 2013
c. Identify priority areas, hubs and linkages for consideration that will maximize existing resources and return on investment	Stakeholder Consortium, local Municipalities, Service Providers, Network Owners	Identify opportunities by end of Q3 2013
d. Establish ways to create the necessary partnerships to secure resources for network connections and extensions	Stakeholder Consortium, local Municipalities, Service Providers, Network Owners	Identify potential partnerships by end of Q3 2013
e. Investigate possible project funding applications for broadband/bandwidth (eg. Fed Dev; P3)	Stakeholder Consortium, local Municipalities, Service Providers, Network Owners	Ongoing
f. Identify opportunities for establishing ORION points of presence to facilitate post-secondary research presence and hub development	ORION, Post-Secondary linked research entities,	Opportunity Assessment by end of Q2 2013 One New Link in Place by end of Q4 2014

## GOAL 3

### Incremental -

## Develop The Innovation Network Connecting Businesses To Opportunities

#### Key Actions:

- Support and help facilitate an 'Innovation Council', bringing together key stakeholders on a regular basis to help identify emerging opportunities and drive change
- Maintain a program of direct business contact, both with existing businesses and potential investors, to facilitate partnerships that lead to growth

Issue 3: As the economy continues to transform from goods-production to knowledge-based services, additional emphasis must be placed on helping companies and institutions become innovative in order to continue to grow.

Innovation has allowed for a decades-long transformation of the economy from goods production to service production. Manufacturers have been able to produce more value added output without increasing the number of employees. Today close to 80 per cent of jobs in Canada are service-oriented, a percentage that has grown steadily since World War II.

While manufacturing in the Region remains important, the employment profile shows just over 80 per cent of jobs in the service producing sectors. Significant clusters exist in the Region in information and communications technology, life sciences, and financial services, with a strong emphasis on the provision of services such as management, engineering and research and development in these areas.

The Region's future prosperity will depend on how well the innovation network is developed and fostered to support continued business and institutional innovation.

Current innovation initiatives underway in the Region include:

- The Innovation Leaders Forum, designed to bring leaders together to identify areas of focus in innovation and help establish solutions
- The Regional Hospital Network, where the three Regional hospitals in York Region meet regularly to discuss ways to develop innovative healthcare delivery solutions that also take advantage of and help build local business innovation
- Major private sector research investments including IBM, GE, AMD, Magna, and Huawei
- Emerging/potential innovation hubs within the Region include the Kortright Centre for Conservation in the City of Vaughan as a sustainable living/renewable energy hub, Southlake Regional Health Centre in the Town of Newmarket as a medical research centre, the proposed Water Centre in the Town of Georgina with an education and research focus, the Koffler Scientific Reserve in King for research and education in biodiversity, ecology and conservation biology, food production-related centre near the University of Guelph research facility in King Township's Holland Marsh.

The emerging relationships between businesses, institutions and emerging innovation hubs is a key element for future success.



Action Item	Delivery Partners	Targets and Timing
a. Investigate business incubator models in other jurisdictions and identify potential investors that may have an interest in the York Region market expansion and connections	Local Municipalities, ventureLAB	Investigate five markets by end of Q4 2013
b. Promote the development of potential innovation hubs as they emerge, which could include but not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A water centre on Lake Simcoe</li> <li>• A Clean-tech centre associated with the Kortright Centre</li> <li>• Life Science/health related centres around the Regional hospital network</li> <li>• An E-car centre around Magna</li> <li>• A Smart Grid centre around the various related research facilities</li> <li>• An Agri-business centre around Holland Marsh</li> <li>• A Social Innovation centre/network</li> </ul>	Local Municipalities, ventureLAB, Host Organizations, Seneca College, York University, other Post-Secondary Institutions, Conservation Authorities	Ongoing development - target one hub per year launched through 2015
c. Facilitate the emergence of the innovation leaders forum as a recognized Regional community engagement vehicle for innovation	Innovation Leaders Forum, ventureLAB	Establish annual innovation forum event by end of Q3 2013
d. Undertake and/or support key events that promote innovation in key sectors and advance the profile of the Region as a centre for innovation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MedEdge Summit, OCE Discovery, Arts Exposed, Creative Industries Symposium, Business Innovation in Changing Times series</li> </ul>	ventureLAB, local Municipalities, Small Business Enterprise Centres, Board of Trade and Chambers, York Region Arts Council, Economic Development Stakeholders	Five key annual events to reach a minimum of 2,000 direct participants/contact per year
e. Maintain and expand the investment and marketing function of the Economic Strategy Branch to support business retention, expansion and attraction in key sectors through connections to local, domestic and international opportunities	Local Municipalities, ventureLAB	Ongoing - support 400 business engagements per year. Target 3 per cent impact on total job growth
f. Maintain and expand the York Small Business Enterprise Centre to support business start-up, growth and entrepreneurship	Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation	Ongoing - support 400 business engagements per year
g. Support ventureLAB's key sectors business commercialization services	ventureLAB	Ongoing - ventureLAB Board participation and funding
h. Develop and maintain an online manufacturers portal to connect industry to opportunities	Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC), Stakeholder Advisory Committee	Ongoing - target 50 EMC members in York Region by end of Q4 2013

## GOAL 4

### Incremental -

### Develop A Strong, Common Marketing Message

#### Key Actions:

- Develop an economic development communications plan built around a series of clear messages about York Region as a place to grow and invest
- Create interactive tools to support investment attraction efforts
- Develop a marketing campaign around emerging real estate opportunities such as the subway extension, centres and corridors, and major employment areas/business parks

Issue 4: Despite its size and importance, the Region remains 'under the radar' relative to other jurisdictions seeking knowledge-based economic growth which may lead to missed investment opportunities.

York Region is a significant economic entity within the provincial and national context. The Region has accounted for 20 per cent of the population growth in the province over the past five years, and will continue to attract the largest share of growth of any jurisdiction to the year 2031 as allocated in the Provincial Growth Plan. York Region also accounted for 13 per cent of new job creation in the province in 2011, and is one of the few jurisdictions to avoid significant job losses during the economic downturn in 2008. The Region is home to the second highest number of information and communications technology companies in the country and the highest per capita.

These facts, and many others like them, are impressive and speak to some of the key strengths and opportunities that make York Region an attractive location for business growth and investment.

The Action Plan consultations and staff interactions with investors and investment intermediaries consistently point to the need for a concerted effort to develop these facts into a common set of messages and develop a plan to relay them consistently to a variety of audiences. York Region is a powerhouse, able to compete on the global stage for the best and the brightest investments and talent. Sending this message consistently will only serve to increase the chances of being considered early in investment decisions. York Region should strive to be top-of-mind as a place for investment and innovation.

As the various community stakeholders engaged in business attraction, retention, and expansion work more closely together, it is imperative that messages be coordinated to maximize their impact. Other successful jurisdictions develop and share common messages to cross promote and build caché. Joint marketing of partnered events, media releases on new collaborations, and targeted online tools and initiatives are opportunities to build common positive messaging.

As unique opportunities arise around initiatives such as major transit extensions, coordinated marketing of emerging real estate location opportunities could also be beneficial to the various stakeholders involved.

Action Item	Delivery Partners	Targets and Timing
a. Develop a communications plan to deliver the messages that raise the profile of the Region as a place to do business and invest, including print, online, and event/tradeshows channels	Economic Development Stakeholders	Communications plan completed by end of Q2 2013
b. Develop, in partnership with Economic Development stakeholders, a series of common messages that reinforce the strength of the Region and positions York as a premier business/investment destination in North America, for use by the stakeholders in their marketing communications.	Local Municipalities, ventureLAB, Board of Trade and Chambers of Commerce	Message developed by end of Q3 2013
c. Establish regular media contact to distribute messages around the business growth, success, and innovation (Canada News Wire, local media, social media)	Media	Ongoing – tracked increased inquiries and re-posts over target geography/sector vehicles
d. Develop an online mapping tool for investors/ businesses to connect with opportunities, utilizing business survey data and information on the Region's innovation assets and partners	Local Municipalities	Online tool in place by end of Q4 2013

## GOAL 5

### Incremental -

### Creating The Place To Live, Work And Invest, Including Appropriate Real Estate

#### Key Actions:

- Develop and maintain an inventory of key employment opportunities to support policy development and marketing
- Identify appropriate publicly-owned lands that could be used to attract desirable investments such as research-based institutions
- Ensure live-work opportunities are supported through policy

Issue 5: Significant real estate opportunities exist to support future value-added, knowledge-based employment growth, particularly employment lands along 400 series highways, but short-term market pressures put some areas at risk of conversion which may negatively impact long term economic vitality. The extension of the Toronto Subway System into the Region and significant investment in rapid transit will create the opportunity for high-intensity employment growth in key knowledge-based sectors, and associated planning approvals need to be in place to ensure investment interest can be accommodated.

York Region has a wide range of real estate options to support future business growth and investments. Currently, employment land supply is monitored, but there has been no overall evaluation of major employment site opportunities along the Centres and Corridors. It would serve the interests of multiple stakeholders to ensure this information is available for policy development, implementation and marketing efforts.

The Region is fortunate to have four major 400 series highway corridors, which provide high value sites for a variety of employment related uses. Sites with direct 400 series highway frontage are prime opportunities to attract significant employers in key sectors

requiring highway exposure. This is an important aspect of being able to attract sufficient quantities of the right kind of jobs. These sites are also under pressure for conversion to retail and residential uses and it is important they be protected for high value-added users, as the supply of direct frontage sites is limited.

The Centres and Corridors initiative will also provide opportunities to develop urban, transit-oriented, and live-work communities that are attractive to a young, highly skilled workforce. The province has indicated future investments in post-secondary institutions will favour locations that also support urban mixed-use development. It is critical that stakeholders including the development industry recognize these opportunities and help build employment space that supports the types of workplaces of the future. The development industry has a key role to play in prosperity building and needs to be engaged in policy and marketing efforts related to land and buildings.

Consideration also needs to be given to developing spaces that support innovation, including research parks and business incubators. Public assets and public-private partnerships need to be explored to bring these kinds of facilities online as required.

Action Item	Delivery Partners	Targets and Timing
a. Develop a 'Centres and Corridors' office marketing strategy	Relevant local Municipalities, development industry	Inventory updated by end of Q4 2013
b. Develop a targeted employment land marketing strategy	Relevant local Municipalities, development industry	Strategy complete by end of Q4 2013
c. Undertake/maintain an inventory of office and employment land development sites for marketing and policy development purposes	Relevant local Municipalities, development industry	Inventory updated by end of Q4 2013
d. Undertake an assessment of employer locations relative to Centres and Corridors Policies and monitor migration of employers over time annually		Complete base information by end of Q4 2013
e. Undertake an employee location study to determine changes over time in commuting patterns and live-work relationships	York Region Employers	Establish survey by end of Q2 2013
f. Undertake an annual development industry event to exchange information on market activity and promote development opportunities	Local Municipalities, development industry	Hold first event by end of Q4 2013
g. Investigate the use of public lands and buildings to facilitate innovation related activities, including research parks, innovation hub anchors and incubator	Local Municipalities, other public institutions	Site identification and review by end of Q4 2013
h. Support the development of arts, culture, agricultural and tourism opportunities that support York Region as the place to work, live, play and invest.	Local Municipalities, Central Counties, York Region Arts Council	Ongoing
i. Encourage the development of complete communities that incorporate affordable housing and multi-modal transportation opportunities that support the workforce needs of the Region.	Local Municipalities	Ongoing



## GOAL 6

### Develop A Viable Workforce

#### Key Actions:

- Support the connection between the skilled workforce and employers
- Support programs that identify and access the under-utilized immigrant workforce

*Issue 6: Significant talent within the workforce continues to be under-utilized, particularly in the immigrant workforce, which will become increasingly important to tap into over time.*

**THE RIGHT KIND OF JOBS:** York Region currently has an employment base of 521,000 jobs, which is expected to grow to 780,000 jobs by 2031, according to the Provincial Growth Plan. This job market is made up of two components – population related jobs and core economy supportive jobs. As York Region continues to be a leader in population growth, population related jobs will naturally follow.

At least two-thirds of the new jobs will need to be in the core economy of business services, manufacturing and related activities to maintain the current balance. These activities are not tied directly to population, but rather to a host of location factors such as the presence of industry clusters and will require effort to attract and retain. The presence of significant clusters in various key sectors positions the Region to attract value-added jobs.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMMIGRANT WORKFORCE:** Research suggests that maintaining a steady net in-flow of highly-skilled immigrants and supporting their transition into the economy is critical to ensuring the Region's workforce continues to satisfy growing employer needs.

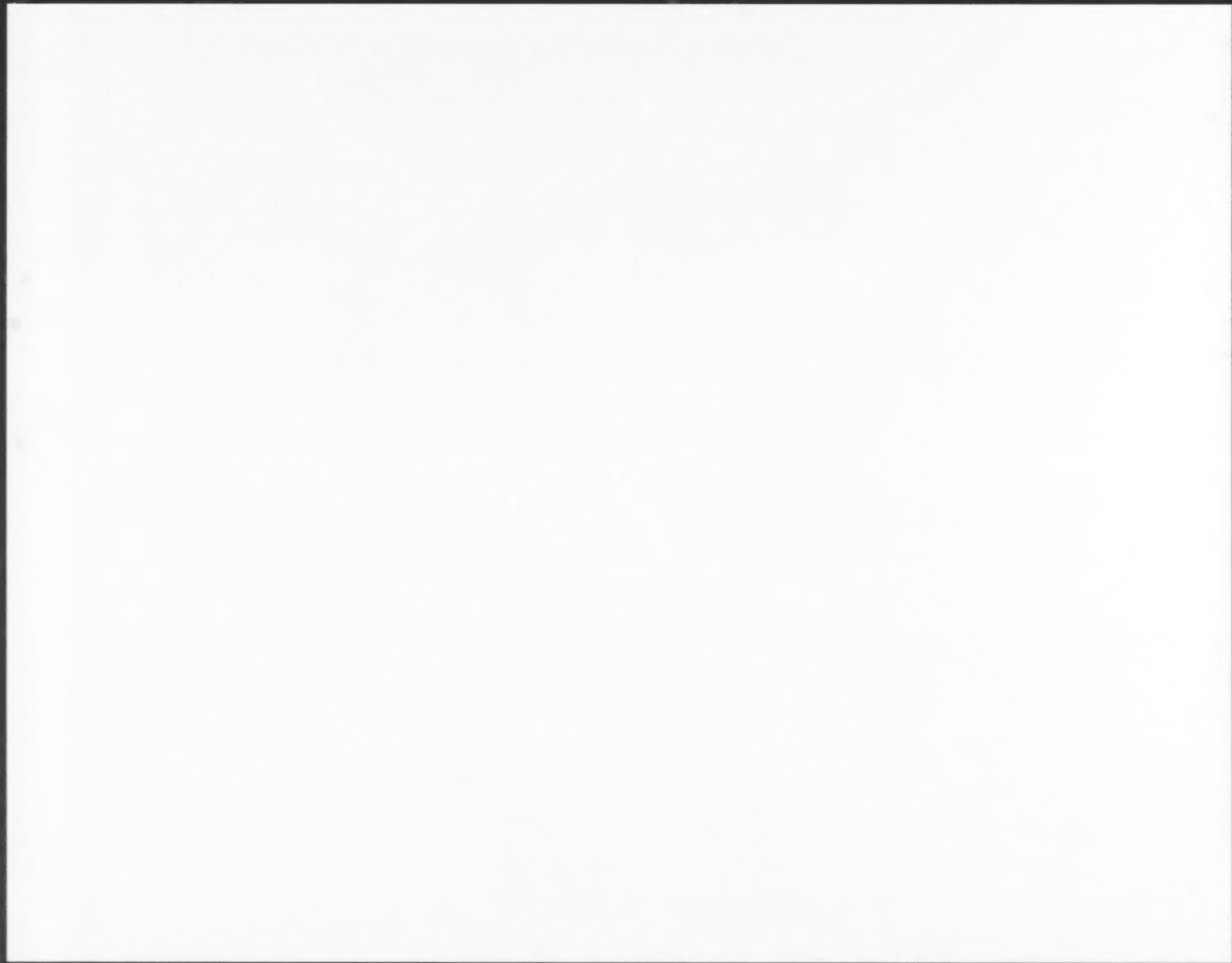
The York Region Immigrant Settlement Strategy was approved in September of 2011 and is designed to assist newcomers in becoming economically integrated via programs developed around a series of priority areas. These include creating employer awareness, supporting skills accreditation and supporting newcomer entrepreneurs. York Region's first Internationally Educated Professionals (IEP) conference was held in October of 2012 and focused on these themes.

It is important to provide services for new immigrants, and connect them with employers that maximize the use of their skills.

**THE ROLE OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Colleges and universities have a large role to play in producing graduates with relevant skills for business and industry. Opportunities for co-operative and intern placements assist businesses with immediate needs while developing relevant workers. Developing the post-secondary presence in the Region directly supports local business needs.



Action Item	Delivery Partners	Targets and Timing
a. Track employment and hiring trends to ensure the right jobs are growing in the Region	Workforce Planning Board	Establish projection and benchmarking methodology for annual reporting starting by end of Q4 2013
b. Maintain the manufacturing web portal with a job hiring board to support the employment needs of the manufacturing sector	EMC, public and private employment agencies	Ongoing
c. Support the immigrant settlement strategy relating to the maximizing of access of employers to untapped immigrant talent	Public and private employment agencies	Support target delivery over three year plan time-frame
d. Partner on the delivery of the IEP Conference to support increased participation of the immigrant workforce	IEP, Advisory Group	Deliver IEP Conference in October 2012
e. Promote links between employers and post-secondary institutions to develop intern and co-op employment opportunities	Seneca College, York University, other post-secondary institutions with Regional presence, employers	Ongoing
f. Promote entrepreneurship and new business formation as an alternative to traditional work for newcomers, youth, and the unemployed/under employed	Small Business Enterprise Centre, Ontario Works, Community and Health Services	Ongoing
g. Provide support services for existing and potential employers to access appropriate labour and training	Workforce Planning Board, Ontario Works, Employment Ontario, post-secondary institutions	Ongoing



We welcome your input and comments to improve this document.  
If you have suggestions to facilitate the retention and creation of  
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